



All About College Application and Exploration Month

You may have heard that College Application and Exploration Month is an event that encourages high school seniors to apply to college. While high school seniors are applying to college, middle school students across Tennessee can use this month to explore colleges and careers. The involvement of all your students in College Application and Exploration Month will add to the college-going culture in your community.

College Application and Exploration Month can be one of the most exciting and inspiring months of the school year, and the possibilities for great implementation are nearly endless! With proper planning, event promotion, and creative thinking, your College Application and Exploration Month will inspire all students to prepare for life after high school.

As you begin to plan College Application and Exploration Month, tailor the events to the needs of your school. From the timing of events to the location, work with your school's administrators and teachers to plan an event that works best for your school and students.

So, no matter what format your College Application and Exploration Month takes, the following pages will give you ideas and resources that can be tailored to the needs of your school and can help you plan and host a successful College Application and Exploration Month.

College Spirit Week

Focus your College Application and Exploration Month on college with a College Spirit Week in support of local seniors who are applying for college. Each day of the week can have a college theme and you can encourage your students to dress for the day. An example schedule of days is included below.



College Spirit Week Themes

Monday:

Bright Futures Day

Our futures are so bright we need shades! Wear your favorite pair of sunglasses to celebrate your bright future.

Tuesday:

Interview Day

It's important to know how to dress for success. Wear an outfit that you might wear for a job or college scholarship interview.

Wednesday:

Support Our Seniors!

Wear gear from your local high school to support the seniors applying to college! You can wear a t-shirt from the high school or high school colors.

Thursday:

College Colors Day

College will be here before you know it! Wear your favorite college's t-shirt or dress in the colors of your favorite school!

Friday:

School Spirit Day

The work you are doing in middle school is building a foundation for your success in high school and beyond. Let's celebrate our school and your hard work so far this year! Dress in our school colors and gear—the wackier and tackier the better!

Start Your Day with College and Career:

Use morning announcements to share information about upcoming college events and provide students with information about College Application and Exploration Month. Morning announcements can be fun—you can share college fun facts or even start a college trivia competition between homerooms or advisory groups. The first homeroom/advisory to email the correct trivia answer to the counselor wins! Karns Middle School provided the following trivia questions they use with their students. The winning homeroom receives a doughnut party! Use the following announcements as inspiration for your event.

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Sample College Trivia Morning Announcements



Monday

What is an official report given by a college/school which contains official records of an individual student? It will list the time attended, subjects studied, grades received, and special awards/recognition.

Answer: TRANSCRIPT

Tuesday

What is the cost of your classes called? Some schools charge based on how many units you are taking, while others charge a base rate per semester as long as you stay with a certain range of units.

Answer: TUITION

Wednesday

Some schools offer this program where students complete military training at the same time as their college degree. This program pays for students' education in exchange for a multiyear commitment to join the military after graduation.

What is this program called?

Answer: ROTC- Reserve Officer Training Corps

Thursday

What is a secondary school teaching a skilled trade called?

This type of school is a type of post-secondary education that trains students for a specific line of work, often in healthcare or other hands-on fields. This type of school is different from the typical four-year colleges because the programs are less academic, and more job focused.

Answer: Vocational/Trade School

Friday

What is money awarded to students based on academic or other achievements to help pay for education expenses?

Answer: Scholarship

Mock College Application

The goal of this activity is to help middle school students begin to consider what is involved in a college application and begin to plan for their time in high school. It is designed to be short and completed during an advisory/enrichment period.

Distribute the provided “Mock College Application” and allow students time to complete it. After they have completed it, here are some points to discuss with students as you debrief the application activity.

- In high school, you should have a professional email address for college applications as well as job applications. You might think your email is cute/funny, but a future employer won't!
- Review how to calculate a GPA with students. Ask students why GPA is so important in the college application process.
- Ask students to explain what a college major is. Ask students why it is important for them to start thinking about what they might want to do or study.
- Explain that most college applications will ask questions about extracurricular activities. In addition, scholarships are awarded for both academics and involvement. Ask students to share what types of extracurricular activities are available at your feeder high school(s). Make sure to fill in the list with any extracurriculars they don't mention. Explain to students that they should begin to consider how they might want to become involved in high school.

TIP: You can also work with your English teachers to have students write mock college application essays in their English classes.

Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone Number: _____
Address: _____
GPA: _____
Intended Major: _____

Please list any academic honors, awards, and membership activities (for example, honor societies) that you received or participated in while in high school.

Please list your hobbies, outside interests, extracurricular activities, and/or work experience.

Please list your non-school sponsored volunteer or service activities.

Why are you interested in attending college? Why are you interested in studying the major you selected?



Getting the Whole School Involved

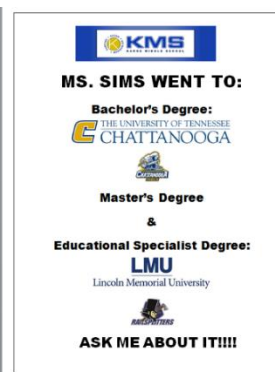
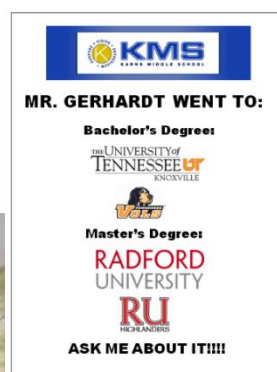
College Application and Exploration Month is more fun when the entire school pulls together to participate. Encourage all teachers and staff to **wear college gear** on designated days and to share information about their own college experience in a classroom warmup or lesson plan.

For the creatively inclined, encourage **college decoration with a door competition!** Offer a small prize to the teacher whose door decor takes the cake and invite community members or local college admissions representatives to act as judges. Students can join the decorating as well by decorating their lockers or designating a bulletin board for student decorations.

Bulletin boards are also a great way to promote a college-going culture on the walls of your school. Don't forget to use the posters and materials mailed to you in your Path to College box! There are countless great ideas for college-themed bulletin boards. Some include:

- Using a US map and teachers' photos to show where they attended college
- Posting celebrity photos and listing where they attended college
- Displaying teachers' college graduation photos
- Listing the steps students should be taking in middle school to be successful in high school and college

Below are just a few examples of faculty/staff involvement from Karns Middle School's College Application and Exploration Week 2020. Visit our online yearbook at <https://tinyurl.com/yb3zdbgr> for more ideas and remember to share your winning decorations on social media, tagging #TNCollegeAppMonth.

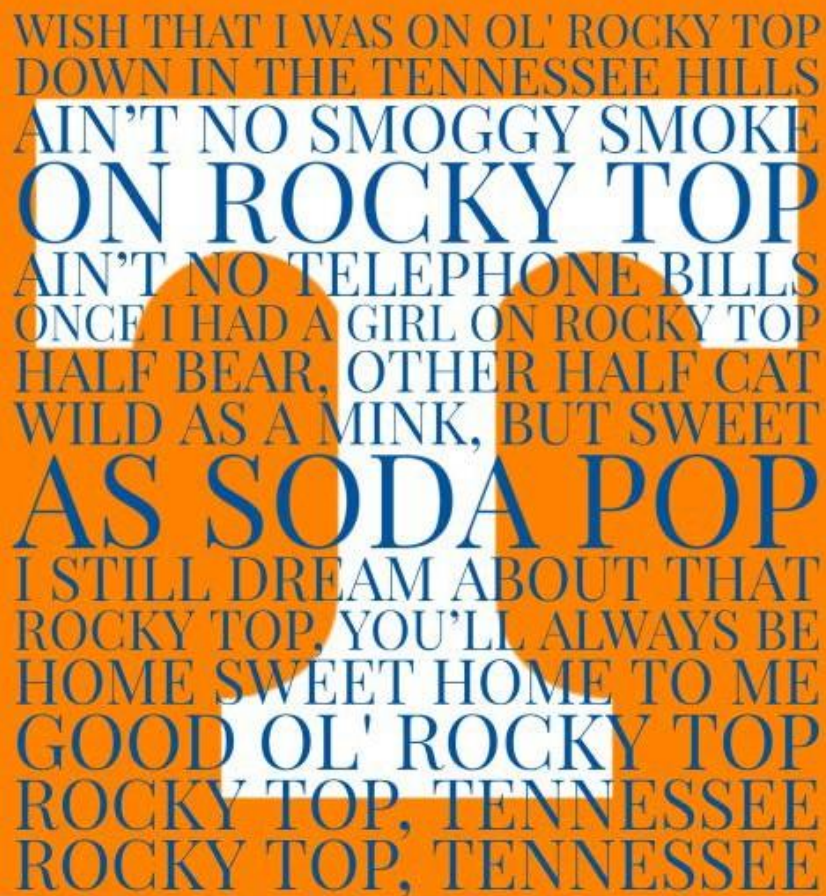


College Fight Songs

During College Application and Exploration Month, play college fight songs during morning announcements or during class changes. Consider creating a competition! Students can guess which school the fight song is from or what teacher attended that school. Students or homerooms who guess each fight song or teacher correctly all 5 days, get a prize at the end of the week (such as a jeans day or a pizza party).

There are many playlists on music channels including Spotify that are compilations of fight songs. Before engaging in this activity, be mindful of music or video sites like YouTube that may be blocked at your school and always preview the content of a song before playing it.

Some sites will include fun facts about the history of a school's fight song. Sports news site Bleacher Report ranked their Top 50 fight songs and put links to each song they chose, with the University of Michigan coming in first.



WISH THAT I WAS ON OL' ROCKY TOP
DOWN IN THE TENNESSEE HILLS
AIN'T NO SMOGGY SMOKE
ON ROCKY TOP
AIN'T NO TELEPHONE BILLS
ONCE I HAD A GIRL ON ROCKY TOP
HALF BEAR, OTHER HALF CAT
WILD AS A MINK, BUT SWEET
AS SODA POP
I STILL DREAM ABOUT THAT
ROCKY TOP, YOU'LL ALWAYS BE
HOME SWEET HOME TO ME
GOOD OL' ROCKY TOP
ROCKY TOP, TENNESSEE
ROCKY TOP, TENNESSEE

Human Bingo

Play human bingo by creating your own board or using the board provided below. To play, students will need to obtain signatures from school staff who meet the criteria listed on the board to get BINGO. For example, for the square that says, “attended college outside the state of TN,” students will need to find a school staff member to sign that square. Consider offering a prize for all of the students who get BINGO by the end of the day. Ask local colleges if they can donate small prizes like pencils or stickers or give each winner a piece of candy.

Human Bingo Card



Instructions: Throughout the day, ask your teachers and school staff about their college experiences. Have the teacher/staff member sign one bingo box that applies to them. Each teacher/ staff member can only sign your sheet once! To win, obtain signatures for 5 squares in a row (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally).

B	I	N	G	O
Attended college outside the state of TN	Majored in English	Attended UT Knoxville, Chattanooga, or Martin	Attended a private college/ university	Always knew that he/she wanted to be a teacher
Received a scholarship to attend college	Completed an internship for college credit	Lived on campus during college	Worked a part-time job while they were in school	Played a sport (intramural or on the school team) while in college
Completed AP, IB or Dual Enrollment classes while in high school	Applied to at least 5 colleges	FREE	Participated in an extracurricular activity in college (clubs, fraternities, etc.)	Can sing his/her college's fight song
Had a double major	Had a minor	Lived off campus during college	Went to college in their hometown	Graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 4 years or less
Changed their major in college	Completed a Master's degree or higher	Studied a foreign language in college	Still wears a t-shirt from his/ her college	Attended a public college/university

College Tours

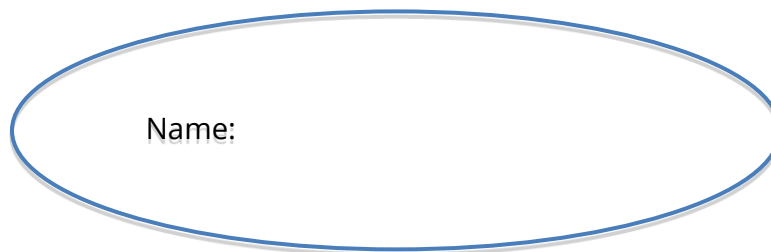
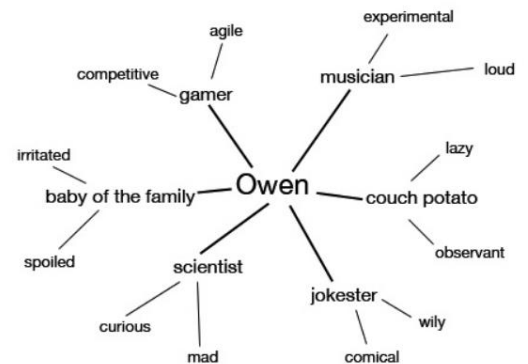
Path to College: Who am I?

The most important step in defining your path to college is to start with yourself. What activities and unique parts of your identity make you a remarkable individual?

Mind Maps Complete a mind map with your first name in the center. Check out Owen's student example:

In the space provided, ask yourself the following questions and how they relate to the center of the map, you!

1. What makes you different?
2. How do others perceive you?
3. What activities bring you to life?
4. In what activities do you spend the most time, effort, and energy?
5. Where do you feel most safe and supported?
6. How do you share your gifts and talents with others in your community?



College Tours

When possible, offer field trips to tour colleges. Allow students the opportunity to see many different types of schools—TCAT, Community College, University. If you are able to take a field trip, make sure to prepare both your students and the university tour guides in advance.

Preparing both your students and your hosts will ensure a smooth campus visit and will help you to develop a partnership with the college/university you are visiting. Before your visit, review the college visit preparation checklist on the following page and provide your students with an opportunity to research the college they are visiting and create a list of questions. If field trips aren't possible, help students take "virtual" tours. Check college websites to see if they have video tours posted or consider using ecampustours.com.

College Visit Prep Worksheet



Dear Student,

I hope that you are looking forward to our college visit to [Name of College] on [Date,Time]. It is important that you are as prepared as possible for our visit, that you research the college in advance, and think of some questions that you can ask your tour guide. Visit the college's website and find the answers to the following questions before our visit.

1. How many students attend the college? _____
2. Is this school public or private? (circle one) Public Private
3. How much is the tuition? _____
4. What type of school is this college? TCAT 2-Year 4- Year
5. What type of degrees does this college offer?(circle all that apply)
Technical Certificate Associate Bachelor's Master's +
6. Name one major at this college that interests you. _____
7. At this college, can you live on campus? Yes No
8. What is the name of the college's mascot? _____

After researching the college, take a few minutes to write 3 questions that you could ask your tour guide during the visit.

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

College Visit Planning Checklist



1-2 Months in Advance

- Contact the college/university to request a campus visit. Schedule the date and time of the visit.
- Arrange for transportation for students to/from the visit.
- Draft any necessary permission slip forms and obtain required signatures from parents. Make sure to collect an emergency contact number for each student.
- Coordinate with the college visit office to determine how to divide your students up into smaller groups. The smaller the groups, the better experience your students will have!
- Divide your students into groups and determine the number of chaperones needed per group.
- Recruit volunteers (teachers and/or parents) to serve as chaperones during the college tour.
- Clearly define and review expectations with chaperones.
- Discuss lunch arrangements with the college/university. Will your students be able to eat lunch on campus? Will the college/university pay for the students' lunches or will you need to arrange payment with the dining hall?

1 Week in Advance

- Create nametags for all students. Make sure the nametags include the student's name, the name of your school, and the phone number of a chaperone.
- Prepare students for the visit. Allow students the opportunity to research the college they will be visiting and write questions for their tour guides. Adapt the worksheet on the previous page.
- Prepare the campus visit office and tour guides to make sure students will be able to see relevant places on campus. You might want to make sure they will see the library, the financial aid office, a dorm room, the cafeteria, and/or the student services office.
- Send home a reminder to parents including what the students will need to bring, the details of the campus visit, and an emergency contact number.
- Notify the tour coordinator of any students or chaperones who will need special accommodations so they may plan walking routes accordingly.

College Visit Day

- Follow all school procedures around checking students in and taking attendance at every stop.
- Consider bringing a portable speaker to play a playlist of college fight songs for the bus ride.
- Encourage students to ask questions about what they see on the campus.
- Be engaged in the college tour and presentation. Point out to students the things that you see. For example: See a row of huge cereal dispensers in the cafeteria? Ask your student tour guide what they eat for breakfast and watch students' reactions.
- Take pictures that you can display at school and share with other teachers and parents and families.

After Your Visit

- Write thank you notes to anyone you worked with on the campus to arrange the visit.
- Continue the conversation with students about college. What did they like? What else did they wish they'd seen? What do they still want to know more about?

Bringing College to Your School

Alumni

Invite high school seniors or current college students who are alumni of your school to speak to your students about their college choice and application process and allow your students time to ask questions.

Alumni could visit with students more informally during an alumni breakfast or luncheon, or alumni could serve on a panel during an all school assembly. The possibilities for using alumni are endless!

College Representatives

Representatives from your local TCATS, community colleges, universities, and/or military recruiters can be used in a variety of ways during College Application and Exploration Month to promote a college going culture in your school. Invite representatives to set up a table during your lunch period(s) and allow students time to talk with the representatives.

If you have multiple representatives who are interested in visiting your school, you could also host a mini college fair. The fair could be during lunch or after school, if you would like to invite parents to participate. This could also be a great opportunity for parents to meet with TCATs and community colleges to discuss using the TN Reconnect grant, a last dollar scholarship for adults to attend a community college tuition-free.

Regardless of how you plan to use your college representatives, you want to make sure that your students engage with them. One strategy, borrowed from Karns Middle School, is to give each representative 5 raffle tickets. When a student asks particularly insightful questions and engages with the representative, he/she can write the student's name on the ticket. At the end of the fair, collect all the tickets and draw a few for prizes!

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Ticket Instructions for College Representatives

Karns Middle School places tickets in individual bags for each representative and attaches the following message:

These tickets are for you to give to any student who asks a great question or who interviews you well.

When you give students a ticket, please have them print their name on the back and then have them RETURN it to you. We will collect them and have a drawing for some cool prizes at the end of the Career Fair!

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College Brochure Contest

Host a school-wide college brochure contest. Students should research and create a brochure for their favorite college. Students can write, draw, and decorate the brochures by hand, or they can be created on the computer. Display the brochures from the students who participate and solicit help from other staff members to serve as impartial judges. Offer a prize for the winner of the contest!

College Brochure Guidelines



Your college brochure should be both eye-catching and informative! Learn more about your college at www.CollegeforTN.org. Be sure to get creative with decoration, but don't forget to include key information about the college you chose, such as:

- a. The university/college name and at least ONE image to represent the school (for example- logo, photo of the campus, etc.)
- b. The school colors and the school mascot
- c. The location of the school
- d. The enrollment of the school (how many students attend?)
- e. Any admissions requirements (GPA, SAT/ACT scores)
- f. Tuition (include both in-state and out-of-state)
- g. Degrees offered (Technical Certificates, Associate Degrees, Bachelor's Degrees?)
- h. Majors (You may choose to list the school's majors but often there are too many to fit on a brochure. In this case, it is acceptable to describe the types of majors offered and include information about where a full list of majors can be found on the school's website).
- i. Extracurricular activities offered
- j. Academic supports offered (for example: tutoring or writing labs)
- k. Housing information (are freshmen required to live on campus?)
- l. Sports (what sports does the school offer?)
- m. A link to the school website for more information
- n. Graduation and retention rate



College Scavenger Hunt

There are many ways to bring college and career information to your students with scavenger hunts. Some ideas include:

- Asking students to find teachers who attended certain colleges
- Placing images of college mascots throughout the school and asking students to try to spot them throughout the day
- Designing a college website scavenger hunt. An example from Joyce Hollins at Summit High School is provided below.

SCAVENGER HUNT

TN Colleges and Universities Edition

Name of College/University: _____

1. **Location:** What is the name of the city the college is located? _____ and which region of the state is the college located? Circle one: East Middle West

2. **Size:** What is the enrollment of the college/university (how many students attend)? _____

3. Is the institution **Public** or **Private**? _____

4. What types of **Degrees** are offered at this College/University? Check all that apply
☐ Certificate/Degree Program ☐ Associates ☐ Bachelors ☐ Master's ☐ Doctorate

5. List 5 college **majors/programs of study** that are offered at this College/University.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. What is the cost of **Tuition**? _____

7. Does the school have a **football team**? Circle answer: Yes No
What other **athletics** are offered (if any)? _____

8. List some of the campus **organizations/activities** for students at this college/university: _____

9. What is the school's **mascot**? _____

10. What is this institution known for? What is an interesting fact? OR Why should a student choose to attend this institution? _____